

# **A MEASURE FOR ENDING HUNGER IN THE UNITED STATES**

PARTNERS IN ENDING HUNGER chooses a hunger measure and defines criteria that determine when hunger has ended

By

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For

Partners In Ending Hunger

### KEY CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS\*

***Food Security*** – Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g. without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).

***Food Insecurity*** – Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

***Hunger*** – The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

\*Definitions published in 1990 by the Life Sciences Research Office (LSRO) of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology.<sup>1</sup>

## **Executive Summary**

Hunger is a persistent problem in the United States. In 1999, three percent of U.S. households (more than 7.5 million people) were food insecure with hunger.<sup>2(p7)</sup> An additional seven percent of households (more than 23 million people) were food insecure without hunger. In all, 31 million Americans, including 12 million children, did not have enough food to meet their basic needs.

In response, PARTNERS IN ENDING HUNGER (a grass-roots organization with over 17 years of experience) has declared itself an organization accountable for providing communities with the tools and training necessary to create and implement effective action plans for ending hunger (see Appendix A). Two essential tools for this work are: (1) a direct and accurate way to measure hunger in a community and (2) criteria that define when hunger has ended.

The hunger measure PARTNERS has chosen is the U.S. Household Food Security Measure. It is a survey instrument and severity scale developed under the joint leadership of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS). It has been used to measure the extent of hunger at national and state levels since 1995 and was specifically designed to be used at the local level as well.

Building on distinctions and definitions presented in the U.S. Household Food Security Measure, PARTNERS has established criteria that define when hunger in a community has ended. According to PARTNERS' criteria, a community has ended hunger when, for two consecutive years, the results of the U.S. Household Food Security Measure show that none of the community's households have members who experience hunger and four percent or fewer of the community's households experience food insecurity. PARTNERS asserts that when communities meet these criteria and sustain these results over time, they have ended the persistence of hunger. These communities will then serve as models and catalysts for other communities to do the same.

*The availability of criteria that determine when hunger has ended is a breakthrough in the movement to end hunger. In light of the newly defined criteria, all of the work being done in communities across the country has been elevated.*

## U.S. HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY STATUS

**Food Secure:** Household shows no or minimal evidence of food insecurity<sup>†</sup>.

**1999 Actual:** 90% of households<sup>1(p7)</sup>

**PARTNERS Target:** 96% or greater of

households

**Food Insecure without Hunger:** Food insecurity is evident in household members' concerns about adequacy of the household food supply and in adjustments to household food management, including reduced quality of food and increased unusual coping patterns<sup>†</sup>.

**1999 Actual:** 7% of households<sup>1(p7)</sup>

**PARTNERS Target:** 4% or fewer of

households

**Food Insecure with Hunger:** Food intake for adults in the household has been reduced to an extent that implies that adults have repeatedly experienced the physical sensation of hunger. At more extreme levels of severity, food intake for children has been reduced to an extent indicating that children have experienced hunger. In most food-insecure households with hunger, adults shield the children from hunger until adult hunger is quite severe‡.

**1999 Actual:** 3% of households<sup>1(p7)</sup>

**PARTNERS Target:** 0% of households

<sup>†</sup>Definitions listed in USDA *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security - Revised 2000*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>‡</sup>Definition provided by Gary Bickel, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

## **Introduction**

Have you ever rushed out of the house in the morning without breakfast only to feel ravenous by noon, been on a strict diet that left you aching for food, or skipped a meal because bills were due and you didn't have enough money to buy lunch? If so, then you are familiar with the uneasy, painful sensation caused by lack of food. That sensation, a natural physiological phenomenon, is known as hunger. We have all experienced hunger. Hunger is a universal human experience.

The *persistence of hunger*, however, is a different phenomenon. To understand the persistence of hunger, a critical distinction needs to be made - the distinction between individual hunger and hunger at the community, state, and national levels. At the individual level, persistent hunger is rare in the United States. A significant, yet relatively small, fraction of the population experiences persistent and repeated reductions in food intake. For most people, the experience of hunger is sporadic, occasional, perhaps cyclic, but not persistent. However, at the community, state, and national levels, it is clear that hunger *is* persistent. Although the individuals who make up the group change over time, some percentage of people are always hungry - year . . . after year . . . after year.

Hunger in the United States typically looks like a mother skipping meals in order to feed her kids, children going to bed hungry because their parents cannot afford to feed them dinner, and elderly people cutting back on food because their monthly income does not cover all of their expenses.

Hunger in the United States, although not life-threatening in the common sense, is costly and debilitating. It is associated with negative health outcomes, higher incidences of hospitalization (especially for children), decreased ability to learn, and lost productivity on the job.<sup>4</sup> It costs money in the forms of health care and food assistance programs, it diminishes our sense of community, and it costs us spiritually and psychologically in ways we are only beginning to understand.<sup>5</sup>

Until recently, we lacked two essential tools for ending hunger in the United States: a measurement tool to directly and accurately measure the experience of hunger relative to U.S. conditions and criteria to determine when hunger has ended. Today, both of these tools are available to people in every community in the United States.

## **Background on Measuring Hunger**

In the 1980s, after decades of relating to hunger as a strictly Third World experience, hunger reappeared as a domestic policy issue in the United States and efforts were mounted to characterize and quantify it. At that time, significant controversy existed regarding how to define hunger relevant to U.S. conditions and, once a definition was established, how to measure it.

In 1984, the *Report of the President's Task Force on Food Assistance* publicly recognized that deprivation of the basic need for food still existed within the U.S. and that a standard measure to quantify the extent of hunger was not available. The report also highlighted an important distinction regarding the definition of hunger relevant to U.S. conditions. Two definitions of hunger, as described in the report, follow:

***Hunger as Medically Defined:*** The medical definition of hunger would be a weakened, disordered condition brought about by prolonged lack of food. In adults, the result of such hunger is a loss of weight leading eventually to reduced physical strength or impaired function. In children, the effect of prolonged lack of food is slower growth, or halted growth if the lack is severe enough, and loss of weight.<sup>6(p34)</sup>

***Hunger as Commonly Defined:*** To many people hunger means not just symptoms that can be diagnosed by a physician, it bespeaks the existence of a social, not a medical problem; a situation in which someone cannot obtain an adequate amount of food, even if the shortage is not prolonged enough to cause health problems. It is the experience of being unsatisfied, of not getting enough to eat.<sup>6(p36)</sup>

The latter definition, hunger as commonly defined, is extremely relevant to U.S. conditions while hunger as medically defined is less prevalent in this country. It is important to emphasize that a clear decision was made regarding the conceptual definition of hunger appropriate for the U.S. context. Hunger in the United States is not primarily caused by illness, special diets, or a busy schedule. Rather, it is best understood within the broader context of food insecurity caused by lack of resources to obtain food. Characterizing hunger in this way was a critical step toward devising a U.S. hunger measure.

The official assignment to develop a standard U.S. hunger measure came in 1990 when Congress enacted the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act.<sup>7</sup> The Act assigned the task of developing the measure to the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS). The Act mandated that the measure be relevant to U.S. conditions; operationally, scientifically, and conceptually sound; and applicable at national, state, and local levels. To accomplish this task, a working group referred to as the U.S. Food Security Measurement Project was formed and a public-private collaborative effort to develop and validate a hunger measure began.

For detailed information on the work of the U.S. Food Security Measurement Project and the development of the U.S. Household Food Security Measure, please see Appendix B.

### **Measuring Hunger**

As a result of the work conducted by the working group and its many public and private collaborators, a valid and reliable hunger measure is now available to all communities. Known as the U.S. Household Food Security Measure, it consists of a food security survey and scale. Taken together, the survey and scale are used to determine food security status.

### ***Food Security Survey***

The food security survey is available in two forms: the Core Module (see Appendix C) and the Short Form (see Appendix D). The Core Module is the recommended survey

because it measures the full spectrum of severity from food secure to food insecure with hunger, including both adult and child hunger. The Short Form can be used when it is not possible to implement the longer Core Module. However, the Short Form is not as extensive as the Core Module and does not measure the most severe range of food insecurity that includes child hunger.

Questions asked during the food security survey are designed to capture information about the following characteristic stages of food insecurity and hunger as experienced in the United States:

- Anxiety that the household food supply might run out
- Running out of food without enough money to buy more
- Reducing the variety, quality, or quantity of foods served
- Reduced food intake and physical hunger for adults
- Reduced food intake and physical hunger for children

Since most households follow the pattern outlined above as they respond to increasing levels of food insecurity, the phenomenon of food insecurity is thought of as a continuum. Therefore, it is possible to represent experiences and behavioral responses along the continuum as points on a numerical scale.

### ***Food Security Scale<sup>8</sup>***

The food security scale ranges from zero to ten. Scores are assigned based on the number of affirmative responses the household provides during the food security survey and whether the household has children. In general, the more affirmative responses a household provides, the higher score it is assigned. For instance, if a household with children responds affirmatively to two out of the 18 questions on the survey, it is assigned a score of 1.8 and is determined to be food secure although its members may worry about running out of food from time to time.<sup>3(p34)</sup> However, if a household with children responds affirmatively to eight out of the 18 questions on the survey, it is assigned a score of 6.4 and is identified as being food insecure with moderate hunger.

### ***Food Security Status***

As alluded to in the previous section, the boundaries of three food security status categories have been defined along the food security scale: (1) food secure, (2) food insecure *without* hunger, and (3) food insecure *with* hunger. The category food insecure *with* hunger can be broken down to reflect moderate and severe hunger. Moderate hunger usually indicates adult

hunger while severe hunger typically indicates child hunger along with more extreme adult hunger.

The following chart shows how the number of affirmative responses a household provides during the food security survey correlates with scale scores and food security status. The chart is based on Exhibit 3-3 in the USDA *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security - Revised 2000*.<sup>3(p34)</sup>

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY STATUS			
Number of Affirmative Responses by Household		Food Security Scale Score	Food Security Status
with children (out of 18)	without children (out of 10)		
0-2	0-2	0.0-2.2	Food Secure
3-7	3-5	2.4-4.4	Food Insecure <i>without</i> Hunger
8-12	6-8	4.7-6.4	Food Insecure <i>with</i> Hunger (moderate)
13-18	9-10	6.6-9.3	Food Insecure <i>with</i> Hunger (severe)

## **Strengths of the Measure**

The U.S. Household Food Security Measure is the most well-researched, user-friendly, and cost-effective hunger measure PARTNERS has found. The measure is:

- Based on over a decade of research and development;
- Supported by a majority of experts in the field;
- Valid and reliable (as demonstrated by six years of data collection and rigorous analysis); and
- Available to *any group* that wishes to implement it.

Additionally, data are available for comparison from the USDA's national- and state-level surveys, as well as from other organizations and communities using the measure. The availability of the U.S. Household Food Security Measure opens the door to new possibilities both for measuring the extent of hunger in our communities and for monitoring the effectiveness of our actions to end hunger.

## **PARTNERS Criteria**

After communicating with other hunger organizations, reviewing the existing literature, and consulting with experts, PARTNERS was faced with the fact that there are no agreed upon criteria for determining when hunger has ended. In fact, there is almost no discussion of *ending* hunger at all. Organizations across the country have goals for *reducing* hunger, but almost none have criteria for *ending* hunger. When this became clear, PARTNERS was faced with a serious question, "How can we end hunger if don't know the end of hunger is?"

The U.S. Household Food Security Measure provides a way to measure the extent of hunger, a language to describe hunger, and the context within which hunger occurs. However, it does not provide a definition of "the end of hunger". That requires a specific set of criteria. In 2000, PARTNERS committed to being the organization responsible for establishing such criteria. PARTNERS began by deciding to establish criteria based on the Food Security Status category defined by the U.S. Household Food Security Measure: food

insecure *with* hunger, food insecure *without* hunger, and food secure.

According to PARTNERS' first criterion: Hunger in a community has ended when, for two consecutive years, zero percent of the households in the community are food insecure *with* hunger. PARTNERS recognizes that no measure yields 100% accurate results and that absolute zero will be elusive. PARTNERS also acknowledges that it is extremely costly and impractical to interview every person in a community. Therefore, community statistics will, most likely, be based on a representative sample. Nonetheless, the only acceptable goal is to achieve zero percent of households food insecure *with* hunger.

Next, PARTNERS addressed food insecurity *without* hunger. It is important to establish criteria for this food security status category because hunger occurs within the context of food insecurity. Families and individuals oscillate between food insecurity and hunger due to a multitude of circumstances such as the loss of a job, high medical expenses, unexpected car problems, and increased heating and electric bills during the winter. Since we cannot eliminate these life circumstances, some percentage of households will still experience food insecurity even after hunger has ended. Successful communities will have support networks to assist people in reestablishing self-reliance during these times of transition.

According to PARTNERS' criteria, four percent or fewer of households in a community will experience food insecurity *without* hunger at any given time once hunger has ended. Consequently, at least 96 percent of households will be food secure.

Once a community meets these criteria and sustains the results for two consecutive years, its task will shift to sustaining the end of hunger. The hunger measurements will then serve as a barometer. Any rise in the number of food insecure households or fall in the number of food secure households will sound an alarm within the community to develop new ways to support people or to revitalize neglected projects and programs.



In choosing these criteria, the staff and Board members at PARTNERS IN ENDING HUNGER are making an educated guess. They do not know if they have chosen the *right* numbers. What they do know is that at this point in the movement to end hunger in the United States, criteria for determining when hunger has ended are essential. It is possible that these criteria will have to be modified or reassessed in the years to come, but only by setting a goal and working hard to achieve it, will we discover the final numbers that represent the end of hunger.

### **Conclusion**

We (as individuals, communities, and a nation) have all the tools and knowledge we need to end hunger. We also have the solutions. When people in communities come together, united in their commitment to end hunger, community-specific solutions will emerge from within. Given the tools and knowledge available to us today, it is clear that we are actually *choosing* not to end hunger. Allowing hunger to exist in our communities is a *choice* we are making. Ending hunger is a possibility that's time has come.

***The time to end hunger is now!***

## **Endnotes**

1. Anderson, S, ed. (1990). "Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult-to-Sample Populations." *Journal of Nutrition* 120 (11s): 1557-1600.
2. Andrews, Margaret, Mark Nord, Gary Bickel, and Steven Carlson (2000). *Household Food Security in the United States, 1999*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report Number 8 (FANRR-8), Washington, DC.
3. Bickel, Gary, Mark Nord, Cristofer Price, William Hamilton, and John Cook (2000). *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Alexandria, VA.
4. Cook, John. \_\_\_\_\_ (get this paper from John)
5. Frair, Charlie (1999). "Are we clueless about the costs of hunger?" The Partner Pages, Volume \_\_\_\_\_, Camden, Maine.
6. President's Task Force on Food Assistance (1984). *Report of the President's Task Force on Food Assistance*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
7. The National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990 is available at <http://www.reeusda.gov/1700/legis/nutmontr.htm>
8. Abt Associates developed the Food Security Scale using 1995 CPS data. Further analyses by Mathematica Policy Research and the USDA's Economic Research Service using 1996, 1997, and 1998 CPS data led to slight modifications of the scale. In general, the conceptual and statistical basis for the scale remains valid over time.
9. U.S. Department of Agriculture (1995). *Conference on Food Security Measurement and Research: Papers and Proceedings, January 21-22, 1994*. USDA, Food and Consumer Service, Alexandria, VA.
10. Reports are available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity> or by calling USDA at (703) 305-2133.
11. U.S. Department of Agriculture (2000). *Second Food Security Research and Measurement Conference, February 23-24, 1999*. USDA, Economic Research Service, Washington DC.

## Appendix A: Developing the U.S. Household Food Security Measure

After Congress enacted the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act and the U.S. Food Security Measurement Project was established, the work to develop a preliminary food security/hunger survey began. In 1994, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and HHS's National Center for Health Statistics co-sponsored a national Conference on Food Security Measurement and Research to obtain guidance from experts in the field.<sup>9</sup> The conference brought together academic experts, private researchers, and government staff. Ultimately, it resulted in consensus regarding both the conceptual basis for a national hunger measure and the best way to implement such a measure in national surveys.

Over the next year, a draft questionnaire for use in national surveys was developed and assessed based on the insight gained from the 1994 Conference. The working group also sought out the expertise of the U.S. Bureau of the Census regarding implementation of the survey. The survey was officially implemented in April 1995 as the Food Security Supplement to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of approximately 50,000 households nationwide. Its chief purpose is to monitor employment and labor force participation. It also collects various specialized data sponsored by Federal agencies. USDA plans to monitor hunger by administering the Food Security Supplement annually, alternating between the April and September CPS.

Two research firms, Abt Associates, Inc. and Mathematica Policy Research, have independently analyzed the data. Abt

conducted the initial analysis of the 1995 data and devised a food security scale based on those data. Mathematica subsequently repeated the 1995 analysis and compared it to their analyses of the 1996 and 1997 data. Both firms confirmed the validity and reliability of the measure. Applying procedures developed by Abt and Mathematica, USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) took over responsibility for data analysis in 1998. Ongoing analyses continue to find the measure reliable. Results are published by the USDA under the report series titled *Measuring Food Security in the United States*.<sup>10</sup>

Using information gained from the first several years of data collection and analysis, the U.S. Food Security Measurement Project developed standardized questionnaires and methods for editing and scoring the results of the Food Security Survey. In 1999, a second Conference on Food Security Measurement and Research was convened to solicit additional input and provide further guidance to the working group.<sup>11</sup> Once again, experts responded with a resounding vote of approval and confidence that the measure was valid and reliable. In 2000, the USDA published its *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security* and made the standardized questionnaires and scoring methods readily accessible to groups outside of the USDA (see Appendix F). Now communities of virtually any size can implement their own hunger measurement plans and produce data that is valid, reliable, and comparable to national and state data collected by the Census Bureau and analyzed and published by the USDA.

**Appendix B:**  
**Food Security Survey: Core Module**

Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity/surveytools/index.htm>

**USDA Food Sufficiency Question/Screeners:**

Questions 1, 1a, and 1b are optional and are not used to calculate the food security scale.

Question 1 may be used in conjunction with income as a preliminary screener to reduce respondent burden for high-income households.

1. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months: -enough of the kinds of food (I/we) want to eat; -enough, but not always the kinds of food (I/we) want; -sometimes not enough to eat; or, -often not enough to eat?

- [1] Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat (SKIP 1a and 1b)  
[2] Enough but not always the kinds of food we want (SKIP 1a)  
[3] Sometimes not enough to eat [SKIP 1b]  
[4] Often not enough [SKIP 1b]  
[ ] Don't Know (DK) or Refused (SKIP 1a and 1b)

- 1a. [IF OPTION 3 OR 4 SELECTED, ASK] Here are some reasons why people don't always have enough to eat. For each one, please tell me if that is a reason why YOU don't always have enough to eat. [Read list. Mark all that apply]

- | YES                      | NO                       | DK                       |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not enough money for food                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not enough time for shopping or cooking            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Too hard to get to the store                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | On a diet  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | No working stove available                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not able to cook or eat because of health problems |

- 1b. [IF OPTION 2 SELECTED, ASK] Here are some reasons why people don't always have the quality or variety of food they want. For each one, please tell me if that is a reason why YOU don't always have the kinds of food you want to eat. [Read list. Mark all that apply.]

- | YES                      | NO                       | DK                       |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not enough money for food               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Kinds of food (I/we) want not available |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not enough time for shopping or cooking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Too hard to get to the store            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | On a special diet                       |

### **Stage 1:**

2. Now I'm going to read you several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months, that is, since last (name of current month).

The first statement is "(I/We) worried whether (my/our) food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more." Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

☐ Often true  
☐ Sometimes true

☐ Never true  
☐ DK or Refused

3. "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

☐ Often true  
☐ Sometimes true

☐ Never true  
☐ DK or Refused

4. "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

☐ Often true  
☐ Sometimes true

☐ Never true  
☐ DK or Refused

[If children under 18 in household, ask Q 5-6. Otherwise skip to first-level screen.]

5. "(I/we) relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed (my/our) child/the children) because (I was/we were) running out of money to buy food." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

☐ Often true  
☐ Sometimes true

☐ Never true  
☐ DK or Refuse

6. "(I/We) couldn't feed (my/our) child/the children) a balanced meal, because (I/we) couldn't afford that." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

☐ Often true  
☐ Sometimes true

☐ Never true  
☐ DK or Refused

**First-level screen:** If household provides an affirmative response to any one of questions two through six (i.e. "often true" or "sometimes true") OR responds "[3]" or "[4]" to question 1 (if administered), then continue to Stage 2; otherwise, skip to end.

**Stage 2:**

[IF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN HOUSEHOLD, ASK Q7; OTHERWISE SKIP TO Q8]

7. "(My/Our child was/The children were) not eating enough because (I/we) just couldn't afford enough food." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?
- ☐ Often true ☐ Never true  
☐ Sometimes true ☐ DK or Refused
8. In the last 12 months, since last (name of current month), did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No (Skip 8a) ☐ DK (Skip 8a)
- 8a. [IF YES ABOVE, ASK] How often did this happen---almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?
- ☐ Almost every month  
☐ Some months but not every month  
☐ Only 1 or 2 months  
☐ DK
9. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK
10. In the last 12 months, were you every hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK
11. In the last 12 months, did you lose weight because you didn't have enough money for food?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK

**2<sup>nd</sup>-level Screen:** If household provides an affirmative response to any one of questions seven to eleven, then continue to Stage 3; otherwise, skip to end.

**Stage 3:**

12. In the last 12 months, did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

☐ Yes ☐ No (Skip 12a) ☐ DK (Skip 12a)

- 12a. [IF YES ABOVE, ASK] How often did this happen - almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

☐ Almost every month ☐ Only 1 or 2 months  
☐ Some months ☐ DK

[If children under 18 in household, ask Q13-16; otherwise, skip to end.]

13. The next questions are about children living in the household who are under 18 years old. In the last 12 months, since (current month) of last year, did you ever cut the size of (your child's/any of the children's) meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK

14. In the last 12 months, did (CHILD'S NAME/any of the children) ever skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

☐ Yes ☐ No (Skip 14a) ☐ DK (Skip 14a)

- 14a. [IF YES ABOVE ASK] How often did this happen---almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

☐ Almost every month ☐ Only 1 or 2 months  
☐ Some months ☐ DK

15. In the last 12 months, (was your child/ were the children) ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK

16. In the last 12 months, did (your child/any of the children) ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK

**END OF CORE MODULE**

**Appendix C:**  
**Food Security Survey: Short Form**

Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity/surveytools/index.htm>

I'm going to read you two statements that people have made about their food situation. Please tell me whether the statement was OFTEN, SOMETIMES, or NEVER true for (you/you or the other members of your household) in the last 12 months.

1. The first statement is, "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- |                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Often true     | 3) Never true            |
| 2) Sometimes true | 4) Don't know or Refused |

2. "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- |                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Often true     | 3) Never true            |
| 2) Sometimes true | 4) Don't know or Refused |

3. In the last 12 months, since (date 12 months ago) did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

- |                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) Yes          | 3) Don't know or Refused (go to 5) |
| 2) No (go to 5) |                                    |

4. **[Ask only if # 3 = YES]** How often did this happen---almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1) Almost every month              | 5) X - Question not asked because of negative or missing response to question 3 |
| 2) Some months but not every month |   |
| 3) Only 1 or 2 months              |   |
| 4) Don't know or Refused           |   |

5. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?

- |        |                          |
|--------|--------------------------|
| 1) Yes | 3) Don't know or Refused |
| 2) No  |                          |

6. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?

- |        |                          |
|--------|--------------------------|
| 1) Yes | 3) Don't know or Refused |
| 2) No  |                          |

**END OF SHORT FORM**



## Appendix D: Limitations of the U.S. Household Food Security Measure

The U.S. Household Food Security Measure, like all measurement tools, has limitations. It is not designed to provide information about specific at-risk subgroups of the population; it is not yet routinely conducted at the local level; it does not address food safety, nutritional value, or ability to obtain food in socially acceptable ways; it is not proven reliable for determining food security status at the level of the individual or individual household; and it was not designed for use outside of the United States. However, each of these limitations is either already being addressed by the USDA or can be dealt with by communities that choose to implement the measure.

- ***At-risk populations***

*Children*

Although the measure captures information about child hunger, it does not provide rich information regarding the experiences of children. In response, the USDA is currently working on a measure dedicated entirely to child hunger. Until that measure is available, communities may want to include additional questions about child hunger on the surveys they administer.

*People who are homeless*

The survey is typically administered to people living in “households”. Therefore, the measure does not provide information about the extent of hunger among people who are homeless. To collect information about this segment of the population, the survey may be modified so that it is applicable to people who do not live in typical households. Although the information collected may not be directly comparable to data collected in the more typical fashion and may not prove statistically significant when analyzing data for the entire population, communities that include information about the experiences of people who are homeless may find that their data is more informative than data that does not include this subgroup.

*Non-English Speaking Respondents*

The survey is typically conducted in English. However, it is available in Spanish and several other languages. The validity of the non-English translations is not yet fully established. Communities that wish to conduct the survey in multiple languages may obtain the necessary translations of the survey from the USDA or from other organizations that administer translations of the survey. If an official translation is not available, someone may translate for the respondent.

*Households without telephone service*

The Food Security Survey is typically administered over the telephone and is proven effective when conducted in this manner. However, this limits respondents to those with telephone service. To include households without telephone service, communities may conduct the survey using multiple methods (i.e. a combination of telephone, in-person, and self-administered mail-in surveys). Although the effectiveness of in-person and mail-in surveys is not yet established, communities may find that using multiple methods provides more complete information about the extent of hunger in their community.

- ***Data collection at the local level***

The USDA, with help from the Census Bureau, collects and analyzes information about hunger and food insecurity at national and state levels. It does not, however, routinely collect data at the local level. Therefore, communities interested in measuring and monitoring hunger at the local level will most likely have to collect and analyze their own data. One way to overcome this obstacle is for community organizations, local government, and a local University or social research company to form a partnership or coalition to measure and monitor hunger. This would diffuse the cost of implementation and would provide

local expert guidance. Additionally, the USDA will provide technical support to any community that takes on measuring hunger at the local level.

- ***Issues beyond resources to obtain food***

The U.S. Household Food Security Measure does not address food safety, nutritional value, or the ability to get food through “socially acceptable” channels. To address these issues, communities may add additional questions to the survey. For example, a community may want to include questions about participation in the Food Stamps program, use of food pantries, and specific obstacles faced by the respondents. Communities may also find it helpful to ask respondents about what they think would make a difference in the effort to end hunger.

- ***Measuring hunger at the level of the individual***

At this time, the reliability of the measure is proven only at the population level. Therefore, the U.S. Household Food Security Measure cannot not be used to determine the food security status of individuals nor individual households.

- ***Measuring hunger outside of the United States***

The measure was developed for use in the United States and, therefore, was designed to be relevant to conditions in this country. At this time, it is not proven for use in other countries. However, it has been successfully implemented in Canada and is currently being tested in several other countries. Ongoing research is necessary to develop valid and reliable hunger measures that can be used in other parts of the world.

## **Appendix E: Essential Resources and Contact Information**

The USDA's *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security – Revised 2000* is an essential resource for state and local communities that want to implement a food security measurement and monitoring plan. The guide provides extensive background on the history, development, and implementation of the U.S. Household Food Security Measure. The Core Module questionnaire, the six-item Short Form, and information about Rasch-model statistical software are also included. *Guide 2000* is available by calling the USDA at 1.800.999.6779 or by visiting [www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity/). For additional information regarding the *Guide 2000*, please contact:

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[www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity](http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity)

AND:

Please contact PARTNERS IN ENDING HUNGER with any questions, comments, or requests for additional information about ending hunger in your community:

PARTNERS IN ENDING HUNGER  
309 Cumberland Ave  
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Phone: 207.553.2056 1.800.STOP HUN(GER)  
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